

Winter Squash

History

Winter squash is native to the United States and was introduced to European settlers by American Indians.

Do not be fooled by the name! Winter squash is actually planted in the spring and harvested in late summer. Unlike summer squash, it is allowed to form a tough rind, which helps it withstand the winter months. This is where the name “winter squash” comes from. In mildly cool temperatures, the squash will store well for up to six months. Smaller squash should only be stored up to three months. Avoid refrigerating the squash as a whole because humidity will cause it to decay quicker.

Brightly colored squash are a good source of vitamin C, A, and beta-carotenes, which are antioxidants that may reduce a person’s chances of cancer, heart disease, and degenerative aging. Vitamin A and beta-carotene are essential for maintaining eye health.

Just like summer squash, winter squash grows on a vine or bush and flowers. In fact, the bloom is edible!



Varieties

Acorn squash is small, round, and ridged with sweet, fibrous flesh.

Butternut squash is bell shaped with tan skin and a nutty flavor- great for pureeing or adding to soups.

Delicata is oblong with yellow and green stripes and a sweet, creamy, caramel flavor.

Hubbard squash is light green or deep orange and has thick skin.

Spaghetti squash is yellow and after cooking, the inside can be scraped into long strands- these fibrous pieces look and taste like spaghetti noodles.

Turban squash is round, brightly colored, and wearing a “hat” on top.

Carnival squash is a cross between acorn and colored squash, therefore, it has brightly colored skin and a sweet, rich flavor.

Dumpling squash comes in a small “individual-serving” size and features a sweet taste.

Kabocha has smooth skin and sweet, honey flesh and is called a “Japanese pumpkin.”

Calabaza squash has mottled skin and fresh, watery flesh.



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